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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN, U.S., CHINA, TERRORISM, RUSSIA,  
ISRAEL;BERLIN

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- [¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

Print media focused on a variety of issues, ranging from the bomb attack on an Iranian nuclear scientist (FAZ), to the debate over a reform of the Hartz IV social security laws (Sueddeutsche), to a lack of doctors in eastern Germany (Die Welt), and the planned postponement of a Bundesliga soccer match due to the expected riots of May 1 (Tagesspiegel). Editorials focused on the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Greens Party and President Obama's plan to raise a special tax on banks to finance the budget deficit. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute opened with the retrial in connection with the collapse of an ice-skating hall that killed 14 people in January of 2006, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on the problems of EADS in connection with the A 400 M. This morning's broadcast media covered the earthquake in Haiti that killed several hundred people.

- [¶2.](#) (Iran) Death of Nuclear Scientist

All German (1/13) papers reported on the death of an Iranian nuclear

scientist, highlighting that "Tehran blames Israel and the U.S." (FT Deutschland).

Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/13) fronted: "Iran accuses the West of a bomb attack in Tehran," noting that "the Iranian regime has portrayed the deadly bomb attack on an Iranian nuclear scientist in Tehran as a western conspiracy.... A State Department spokesman rejected Tehran's allegations as 'absurd,' saying that America has nothing to do with the attack."

Sddeutsche (1/13) headlined: "Nuclear scientist killed in Tehran," adding that the "Iranian regime accuses America and Israel of kidnapping and killing scientists.... Even before the official investigations started, Iranian media accused foreign intelligence services and the opposition People's Mujahidin party of being responsible for the attack. The state-run TV newscast quoted security experts as saying that the technology used points at the Israeli intelligence service Mossad." The paper also noted: "It is known that, since 2005, the CIA has an operation called Brain Drain to persuade Iran experts to leave the nuclear program."

FT Deutschland (1/13) reported: "The case raises clear doubts about  
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the official statements on Mohammadi's death. The website of opposition leader Musawi puts the attack in line with the murder of Musawi's nephew after the severe protests last December. This implies that the murder of the physicist is supposed to be a warning to the opposition... Mohammadi belongs to a group of university professors who supported that candidature of Musawi in the run-up to the presidential elections in June."

Berliner Zeitung (1/13) headlined: "Iranian Riddle," commenting that "there have been contradictory reports on the professor's political convictions.... For western diplomats, it has been immensely difficult for months to assess news coming out of Iran. The country is going through one of its most serious crises since the Islamic Revolution in 1979."

Die Welt (1/13) remarked: "The background of the attack is unclear. However, it would not be the first time that an Iranian scientist with suspected ties to the secret nuclear program disappears or dies under mysterious circumstances."

### 13. (U.S.) Special Levy on Banks

All papers (1/13) carried reports on President Obama's plans to impose a special levy on banks to siphon off the profits they made during the financial crisis. Financial Times Deutschland carried a front page report under the headline; "U.S. Banks to Pay the Bill," while Sueddeutsche headlined: "U.S. Banks to Pay for the Financial

Crisis,"  
and wrote that "the White House is examining a fee to get back the costs for its support of the financial system. In addition, the government hopes to counter the gambling mentality at Wall Street."

Frankfurter Allgemeine noted that "America's banks are to cover the losses of the state-run rescue package." Die Welt reported under the headline: "U.S. Government is Having a Go at Financial Sector" that "a commission is seeking the ones who are to blame for the financial crisis."

"Justified Anger," headlined Sueddeutsche Zeitung (1/13), and judged:  
"The ones who must be blamed should pay. This is the core of the plans for a levy on banks which President Obama wants to introduce...but the much more important goal probably is to alleviate the anger of the public at Wall Street. It is no coincidence that the plans of this special tax were leaked during a week in which the banks publish

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their giant bonus payments for the crisis year 2009. There is no question that this anger at Wall Street is justified. And it would only be fair if the banks are punished, but the question is whether this will be possible without damaging the rest of the economy. Obama is faced with the alternative to approve mere symbolic measures or to impede the supply of loans to the economy. Special levies, irrespective of whether they are imposed on bonus payments or on risky investments, are always substitute actions. At issue is the implementation of the new banking rules, especially stricter capital requirements, as quickly as possible and without watering them down."

Under the headline: "Punitive Tax," Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/13) had this to say: "Considerations in Washington to impose a special tax on banks to cover the government's cost for the rescue of the financial system, are evidence of populism. Shortly before the publication of the results of the 1st quarter, in which the banks will announce their immense profits and which will even intensify the public anger at bonus payments, President Obama is positioning himself on the good side. But it is by no means clear whether the state investments in the banks will really turn into losses for the taxpayer. Much more decisive is that a tax that will siphon off profits will by no means contribute to protecting the financial system from new crisis.... But a flat tax on profits resembles a punitive tax that runs counter to an orderly tax system."

An editorial in Financial Times Deutschland (1/13) carried an editorial under the headline: "Robin Hood or the Taxpayer," and argued: "This levy is right even if this idea of a special tax is based on election tactics. The financial crisis has demonstrated the damage banks can inflict on the economy and that they are not able to save the system - or even themselves. In the end, it will always be

the state which will pay. That is why it is justified to demand a kind of fee for this function of the state. The fact that, of all nations, the country with the globally biggest capital market makes the first step in this respect is a great fortune. What a pity that this idea is hardly implementable for Germany right now. Unlike the United States and the UK, where a few banks again earn a lot of money, it would only be Deutsche Bank where the state could siphon off a few additional euros. All others, however, will take a long time to turn from debtors to creditors."

Handelsblatt (1/13) opined: "It would be the best for all sides if  
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President Obama succeeded in creating a levy on banks which is well conceived and high enough for this industrial sector to pay its debt to the taxpayer in a credible way. If not, it will remain a focus of criticism for a long time to come. At the same time, the capability of the banks to offer loans should not suffer. Only if Obama succeeds in this squaring of the circle will this tax make sense -- as a kind of indulgence which will get the banks out of the purgatory."

Under the headline: "Bonus Payments as Fire Accelerant," die tageszeitung (1/13) argued: "It corresponds to the feeling of justice among many people that bankers pay their share in the costs they created. But there is yet another good argument to present them the bill in connection with the bonus payments. These bonus payments will have the effect of a fire accelerant if a lot of money is again being burnt at the stock markets: a reward will lure bankers to accept irresponsible risks, while, in case of a failure, there won't be any sanctions."

#### 14. (China) Test of Missile Defense System

Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/13) judged: "No one has the intention to attack the People's Republic of China. That is why no one should be afraid of China spending a lot of money on intercepting 'hostile missiles.' If the Chinese [missile] test was really the success as it was sold, and if it is really an anti-missile defense system, then the result primarily shows that China wants "to be one of us." It is nonsensical to link the Chinese missile test to the shipment of U.S.

anti-defense missiles to Taiwan. It is obvious that China is irritated at this U.S. step. But even the most zealous conspiracy theorist cannot turn this into a threat. There would only be one exception, and that would be if: Beijing admitted that it has aggressive intentions towards Taiwan. And this would not go along with the image of China as a peace-loving developing country which the country so diligently spreads about itself."

Regional daily Landeszeitung of Lneburg (1/13) judged: "China is spending a lot of energy on presenting itself as a 'responsible major power,' which -- unlike the emerging nations of the 20th century,

Germany and Japan-- is committed to creating peace. But maybe China is only the shrewd emerging country which is camouflaging its aggressive intentions behind cloudy peace rhetoric. Beijing's confession of setting up a missile defense system is undermining its credibility. Beijing vows that this system is 'defensive,' but this is only half the truth because a strong shield can create a feeling of unassailability, which, in turn, could encourage it to be more aggressive, for instance, about reconquering secessionist Taiwan.

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For  
Eastern Asia, China's missile defense system is explosive news."

#### 15. (Terrorism) Yemen

In an editorial under the headline: "For a Pittance Money to Al-Qaida," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (1/13) had this to say: "Western government knew for a long time how well suited the impoverished and forgotten state in the Gulf of Aden is as a breeding ground for radicals and rebels. The methods of Yemenite President Ali Abdullah

Salih, who has been the strongman of the country for more than 30 years now, have helped even less over the past few weeks to defuse the dangerous mixture of Yemenite conflicts. That is why it is very easy to find a few hopeless people for a pittance. But it would be possible to regain the confidence of the ragged rank and file for a life beyond Jihad. Much more dangerous are the internationally well

linked terrorism godfathers such as the U.S. born Anwar al-Awliki who lives in Yemen. U.S. military psychiatrist Nidal Hasan exchanged mails with him before he shot 13 people in Fort Hood. Air strikes against al-Qaida camps in Yemen, which killed civilians only recently, will drive even more supporters into the radicals' hands. What the country needs is development and a better government. The Afghanistan conference in London should make this clear."

#### 16. (Russia) Dagestan Violence

Berliner Zeitung (1/13) analyzed: "Yesterday's attack on the gas pipeline makes clear that violence is escalating in Dagestan. It is

only a week ago that Russia's Caucasus Republic avoided a catastrophe... Since then, the spiral of violence has been accelerating... It is clear that the police have become the target of Islamic extremists, regardless of whether they are ordinary police officers or the interior minister, who was shot during a wedding in August. It is also clear that this is a problem that all of Russia has to deal with. Dagestan is Russia's largest republic in the Caucasus. It is a micro Caucasus with a dozen of different ethnic groups. Peace is maintained by a sophisticated quota system in the appointment of offices. Ethnic considerations or clan considerations can hardly be distinguished. At its southern fringe, Russia's state structure is failing. Following the 2004 attacks, Putin tried to get the region under control by stopping the elections of governors. Since then, they are appointed by the President.... However, Dagestan shows that Putin's famous

'power  
vertical' of authoritarian governance is failing in the Caucasus."

17. (Middle East) Israel Builds New Wall

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Sueddeutsche (1/13) deals with Israel's intention to build a new wall along the Israeli-Egyptian border and judged: "The existence of the Jewish state is by no means jeopardized only in military terms, but also as far as demography is concerned. Prime Minister Netanyahu explicitly said the new fence along the border with Egypt, which has been considered a 'peace border' since 1979, will be used to keep out illegal immigrants 'to preserve the Jewish and democratic character of the state of Israel.' In this case it aims at African immigrants.

But Israel wants to distance itself much more from the Palestinians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. That is why this barrier, which cuts large blocks of Israeli settlement out of the West Bank, is, in addition to the defense against terror, a monument of demographic insulation. The Palestinians with their high birth rate will make the Jews a minority in their own state. The dilemma is clear: Israel is still the only country in the Middle East where western values have made their mark on. But the openness of democratic societies is colliding with the need for safety and safeguarding the Jewish identity. In case of doubt, Israel will also vote in favor of security, with all its consequences. Those who see themselves fighting for their identity will also see the use of many means to be justified, including such means that are considered questionable elsewhere. That is why Israel is not only sealing off its borders but also continues to develop a laager mentality."

MURPHY